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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1574  
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE  
RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE  
RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE  
RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 001214

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG  
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON  
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/11/2018

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: SE WILLIAMSON'S MEETING WITH UMMA LEADER SADIQ AL MAHDI

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Umma party leader and two-time former Prime Minister Sadiq al Mahdi invited the SE Williamson delegation to dinner at his home in Omdurman on August 9. Al Mahdi called the ICC indictment of President Bashir a "god-send" and expressed hope that the GOS response to the indictment will help concentrate and speed up the process of bringing peace to Darfur. Advocating for an inclusive all-Darfur meeting, Al Mahdi told SE Williamson "we need a big bang" to re-start the Darfur peace process and serve as a lever to force the regime to address problems. Al Mahdi said the Darfur meeting should include political parties, civil society, tribal leaders, and the Sudanese Diaspora and should be held preferably in a neutral location such as Switzerland. Al Mahdi pointed out that President Bashir had accepted al Mahdi's proposed "roadmap" for resolving the Darfur crisis, but to date no significant steps had been taken by the Sudanese regime. Unfortunately, al Mahdi observed, President Bashir only seemed interested in taking small steps to address the ICC indictment. SE Williamson pointed out that there is a danger the regime will attempt to show its flexibility and "agree to everything" in September to avoid the ICC indictment against Bashir, while avoiding any specificity until a later date. SE Williamson urged al Mahdi to help President Bashir understand that empty promises are not enough.

¶2. (C) Al Mahdi and his deputies (daughter Miriam al Mahdi and party SG Abdel Nabi) complained about the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which they said excludes all political forces apart from the NCP and the SPLM "and was not endorsed by the rest of the country." Al Mahdi noted that the SPLM gets "jittery" every time the Umma party urges that the CPA should be more inclusive. "Their benefits will not be touched," he promised, but his deputies repeatedly slammed the SPLM. CDA observed that the SPLM had lost its national vision with the death of the architect of the "New Sudan" vision, SPLM founding father John Garang. Al Mahdi agreed that the SPLM is still trying to regain its momentum and offered that the SPLM seems to react most strongly to the Islamist vision of the NCP (and former NIF). Al Mahdi claimed that the Umma party is also opposed to the NCP's version of Islam, which was created in Sudan by Hassan al Turabi and has its roots in the Muslim Brotherhood and more extremist versions of Political Islam. Miriam al Mahdi noted that Garang's New Sudan vision did not come from the grassroots of the party, but rather from the personal vision of John Garang, which is why the party has now turned more toward southern issues and interests.

¶3. (C) Al Mahdi also complained about the cost and effectiveness of the UN peacekeeping missions in Sudan, both

UNMIS and UNAMID, which he characterized as "expensive tourism." He observed that Abyei was an "unnecessary blood bath" and urged that both UNMIS and UNAMID develop the "teeth" to carry out their missions effectively. SE Williamson agreed and noted the effort the US made to help UNAMID deploy, but there is a long way to go.

¶4. (C) Comment: Sadiq al Mahdi is milking his role in trying to broker a Darfur initiative for all its worth. One interesting idea he has is getting the well-liked, last democratically-elected Governor of Darfur (Al-Tijani Sese, a Fur from the Umma party who organized a meeting of Darfur intellectuals in Tanzania last month) back from his current AU job to do outreach with IDPs in Darfur. But Sadiq's role in Darfur, like that of the SPLM, will be marginal indeed if the NCP lacks the political will to implement real changes to its past Darfur policies. End comment.

¶5. (U) SE Williamson cleared this cable prior to transmission.  
FERNANDEZ